

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 PRS-01

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 SSM-03 IO-13 SAM-01 A-01 OPR-02

SY-05 DODE-00 /082 W

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R 030941Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1678

INFO AMEMCHVSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

CONFIDENTIAL BEIRUT 7259

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT, LE, FR

SUBJECT: CALL ON FRENCH AMBASSADOR

1. CHARGE CALLED ON FRENCH AMBASSADOR HUBERT ARGOD

SEPT. 1. ARGOD MADE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS:

2. ARGOD'S ANALYSIS OF PRESENT POLITICAL SITUATION IS
VERY SIMILAR TO OUR OWN. CHAMOUN AND FRANGIE ARE THE
"HAWKS" ON CHRISTIAN SIDE, WITH GEMAYEL AND THE
PHALANGE PREPARED TO TAKE MUCH MORE MODERATE
POSITION. ARGOD MENTIONED RECENT CONVERSATION WITH
CHAMOUN IN WHICH CHAMOUN HAD SAID THAT PALESTINIANS
MUST BE CRUSHED, EVEN IF IT TAKES THREE MORE YEARS.

3. ON LEFTIST SIDE, ARGOD REFERRED TO GROWING SPLIT
BETWEEN JUNBLATT AND PALESTINIANS, AND NOTED THAT
MANY MOSLEMS IN WEST BEIRUT WERE BECOMING LESS AND
LESS ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT FIGHTING FOR PALESTINIAN CAUSE.
HE NOTED THAT FATAH LEADERSHIP UNDER ARAFAT SEEMED
TO BE READY FOR A COMPROMISE, BUT WAS INHIBITED BY
REJECTIONISTS AND JUNBLATT.

4. ON SARKIS, ARGOD SAID THAT WHEN HE HAD MET HIM

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TWO WEEKS AGO IN EAST BEIRUT (WHEN HOUGHTON AND MACK

WERE THERE), SARKIS WAS VERY RESERVED AND RETICENT. SARKIS HAD REMARKED THAT IT WAS NOT ESSENTIAL FOR HIM TO TAKE OATH OF OFFICE IN PRESENCE OF AT LEAST 50 DEPUTIES; HE COULD SIMPLY PRONOUNCE PRESIDENTIAL OATH ON RADIO OR EVEN BY MAIL, AND THIS WOULD BE SUFFICIENT. ARGOD MENTIONED THAT PRESIDENT EMILE EDDE (RAYMOND'S FATHER) HAD SERVED PRESIDENT FROM 1936-40 WITHOUT EVER HAVING TAKEN THE OATH OF OFFICE (BECAUSE THE FRENCH HAD SUSPENDED THE

CONSTITUTION IN 1936), AND THERE WERE ALSO PRECEDENTS IN FRENCH LAW FOR CERTAIN OFFICIALS TO SERVE WITHOUT HAVING TAKEN REQUIRED OATH.

5. ON SYRIAN INTENTIONS, ARGOD SAID HE DID NOT THINK IT WAS POSSIBLE FOR SYRIA TO IMPOSE MILITARY SOLUTION BY SEPT 23, EVEN IF THEY WISHED TO DO SO. HE POINTED OUT THAT OTHERS HAVE SAID THAT SYRIA INTENDS TO MAKE A MILITARY MOVE BY SEPT 5 OR 15 IF NO POLITICAL SOLUTION IS IN SIGHT, BUT SYRIANS HAVE NEVER SAID THIS.

6. ON POSSIBLE EVACUATION, WE AGREED THAT SITUATIONS OF OUR EMBASSIES WERE SIMILAR; WE BOTH HAD STAFFS OF ABOUT 50, INCLUDING HOST COUNTRY NATIONALS, FOR WHOM SOME PROVISION WOULD HAVE TO BE MADE IN CASE OF AN EVACUATION; BOTH WERE ALSO FAIRLY EXPOSED, AND OUR MOVEMENTS WERE CLOSELY WATCHED: IT WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE FOR US TO CLOSE DOWN AND QUIETLY STEAL AWAY. AMB. ARGOD THOUGHT THAT AN ATTACK AGAINST WEST BEIRUT WAS UNLIKELY AND, IN ANY CASE, IT WAS TOO SOON TO MAKE ANY DECISIONS BASED ON THIS POSSIBILITY.

7. ON QUESTION OF PARTICIPATION BY FRENCH NATIONALS IN CURRENT FIGHTING, ARGOD SAID THAT OFFICIALLY HE KNOWS OF NO SUCH PARTICIPATION. UNOFFICIALLY, HE IS AWARE THAT THERE ARE A NUMBER OF FRENCHMEN INVOLVED ON BOTH SIDES, BUT NONE HAS EVER SOUGHT TO CONTACT HIM. ONE FRENCH NATIONAL HAD BEEN KILLED WHILE FIGHTING WITH PHALANGE LAST OCTOBER AND
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ANOTHER, WHO WAS FIGHTING WITH SAIQA AND WHOSE PICTURE HAD APPEARED IN FRENCH PRESS, HAD QUIETLY RETURNED TO SYRIA.

8. ON FRANCE'S ROLE, AMB. ARGOD SAID THERE WAS NOTHING FRANCE COULD CONTRIBUTE AT MOMENT. HE HAD ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT ANY ROUND-TABLE CONFERENCE WOULD HAVE TO BE IN LEBANON (NOT PARIS)

BECAUSE POLITICAL LEADERS ARE THE MILITARY LEADERS
AND HAVE NO DEPUTIES WHO COULD COMMIT THEM. HE
HOPED THAT FRANCE WOULD NOT BE ASKED TO PROVIDE
TROOPS TO MAN A CEASE-FIRE LINE, SINCE ANY SUCH TROOPS
WOULD BE IN EXTREMELY DANGEROUS POSITION NOW THAT
POPULATION WAS COMPLETELY ARMED. ONCE FIGHTING
HAD STOPPED, HOWEVER, HE BELIEVED FRANCE WOULD BE
PREPARED TO ASSIST IN REBUILDING LEBANON'S MILITARY
ESTABLISHMENT AND IN CONTRIBUTING TOWARD ECONOMIC
RECONSTRUCTION.

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